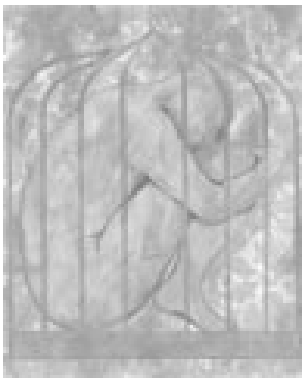
ISMS
&
Introduction to Cultural Competency



DIVERSITY AMONG WOMEN

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are ugly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught,

You've got to be carefully taught.
--Oscar Hammerstein II

Acknowledging and accepting diversity in sexual orientation, racial and ethnic background, religion, age and physical ability is crucial to the movement to end the violence against and oppression of women. There are several reasons why we must embrace diversity and respect those who we consider different from ourselves:

1. If we are truly committed to achieving equality and justice for women and children, we cannot, in good conscience, turn a blind eye to the many injustices our society perpetrates against others. Either everyone is equal or there is no equality.

2. Prejudice of any kind turns women against women. It threatens our unity and causes our efforts to break off into smaller, conflicting parts. As a result, it both divides and cripples us.

3. In order to effectively counsel women, it is of extreme importance not to judge their lifestyles, backgrounds or decisions. Furthermore, we must be able to relate to each individual and to ensure that she feels comfortable talking to us or coming to the shelter. Any woman who feels unwelcome, misunderstood or offended by even an inadvertent lack of sensitivity will gain nothing, and may even be hurt by her experience with the Women's Center.

The purpose of this section is to introduce you to the many issues involved in dealing with diverse groups of people. The Women's Center is for all women, regardless of how similar or different they are to ourselves or to what we consider

to be the "majority" in our culture.

In preparing to work with diverse women, it is important to recognize that our viewpoints are very much shaped by the world around us. In order to effectively deal with people who are different from ourselves, we must make a deliberate effort to learn more about them and to examine our values and attitudes toward them. Moreover, we can try to look for the common bonds among us, while respecting the differences that make us- - unique individuals and groups.

You may be wondering if we are counseling women who have been victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, then why to we need to talk about women of color, lesbians or handicapped women? We have already talked about how women have been, and continue to be, oppressed throughout history. Many of the women we serve may be survivors of not just one oppression but also double or multiple oppressions. This affects how they perceive the world, how they respond to counseling and how they feel while in the shelter.

In exploring cultural and lifestyle issues, is important to put aside defensive feelings, such as "But I try not to be a racist" or, "But some people really deserve what they get." We are all part of a society that oppresses certain people. We have all learned prejudices toward certain types of differences, and as much as we try to be fair, we probably continue to practice inadvertent forms of prejudice. Even people in oppressed groups have learned to be prejudiced against themselves. For instance, African American women learn that they are valued less than Caucasian women, white lesbians learn that they are a menace to society and differently-abled women learn that they are less capable than others are. Un-learning these attitudes is a life-long process for those of us who wish to overcome our own prejudices.

In the process of changing our attitudes, we need to challenge the generalizations we have developed and question whether or not we have based our conclusions on erroneous information or unfair assumptions. When counseling, we must put aside our pre-conceived notions and let the client be the guide in the counseling process.

Definitions

Stereotype: Labeling an entire group of people based on the actions of some. Even when stereotypes appear to be positive the consequences of making such generalizations are negative.

Prejudice: A strong opinion or attitude that is based upon another person's race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other group. A prejudice is extremely difficult to change.

Social Power: access and availability to resources needed to get what you want and influence others.

PREJUDICE + POWER = "ISM"

Oppression: The systematic subjugation of a social group by a group with access to social and economic power.

- Institutional
- Cultural
- Personal

Discrimination: To act on your prejudice and stereotypes.

Privilege: special circumstances, advantages or benefits based on membership in a culturally dominant group.

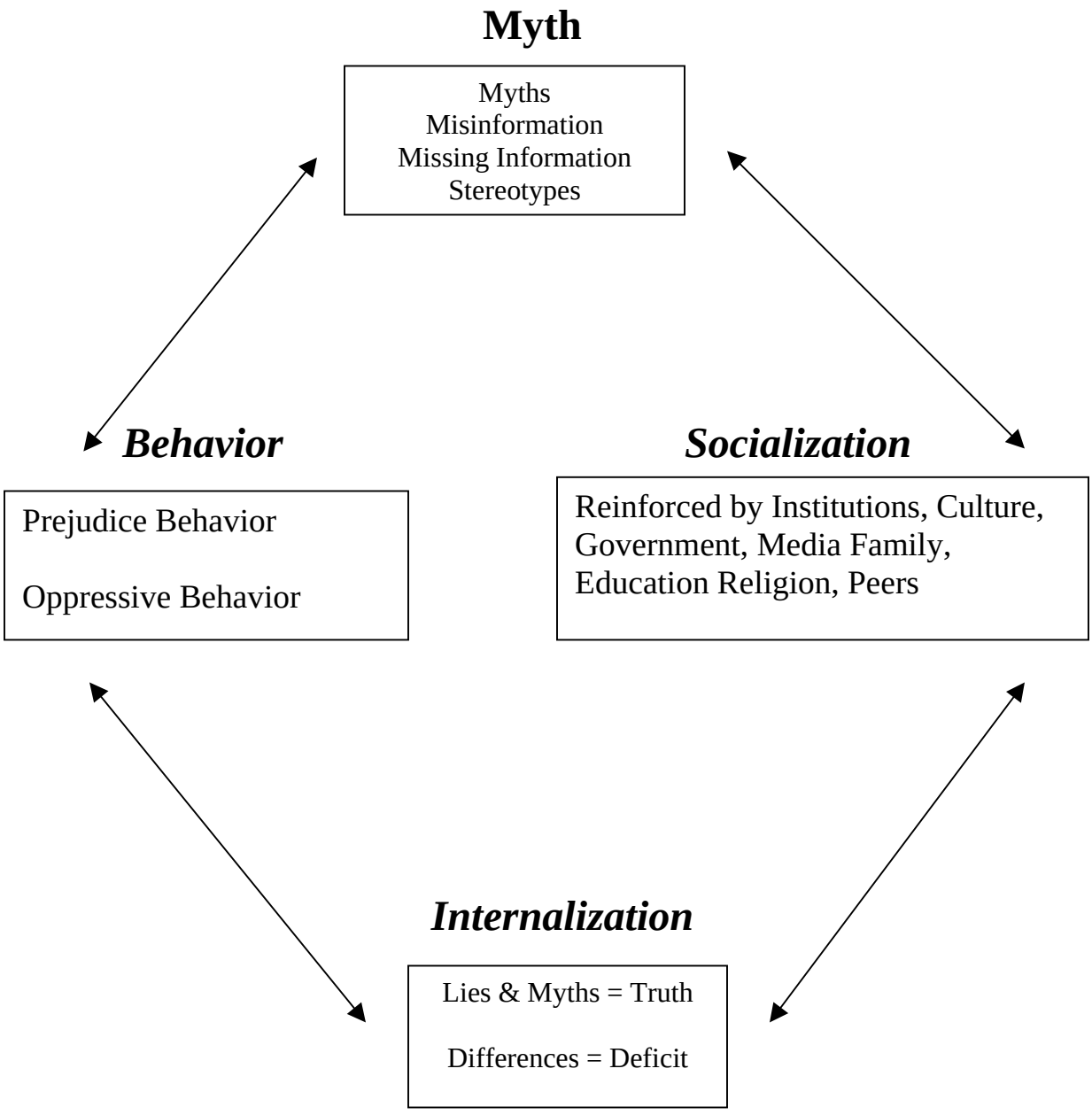
Should we be Outraged?

- People with disabilities are often denied a sense of sexuality. Little or no sex education is provided. Source-Network of Victim Assistance
- African Americans comprise 16% of all drivers nationally and constitute 74% of the drivers stopped by police. Source- American Civil Liberties Union
- During the debate over reforming welfare, many legislators promoted implanting Norplant (long-acting reversible contraceptive) in welfare recipients as a condition of cash assistance, or providing monetary incentives to low-income women who accept Norplant. Source–NARAL Foundation
- Studies have documented that women are most often the victims of size discrimination. Source- The Calf. Now Activist Newsletter
- HIV positive women are treated differently from men in many developing countries. Men are more likely to be excused from their actions that resulted in infection, whereas women are often blamed, abandoned and rejected by family members. Source- www.avert.org
- Corporate America has spent $2 hundred million in legal awards and settlements in a series of high profile age discrimination workplace lawsuits since 1996. Source- http;//clem.mscd.edu/
- Obese children rate their quality of life with scores as low as those of young cancer patients on chemotherapy.
- Over a working lifetime, the wage disparity costs the average American woman an estimated $250,000 in lost wages. Source- Business and Professional Women
- The typical high school student hears anti-gay slurs 25.5 times a day. Source-www.matthewsplace
- According to the FBI Hate Crime Statistics report, sexual orientation is ranked third, religion is second, and race is ranked first as the motive for committing the hate crime. Source-www.matthewsplace
- 2/3 of elder domestic violence abuse victims are women
- "Zoner surprised at neighbors' "vindictiveness" on retreat plan" ***7/30/03 Press Enterprise***
  A local couple wanted to establish a religious retreat camp on their land in Numidia, PA. The property would host Catholic camps for kids during the summer and and serve as a retreat for adults in the fall and spring. At the zoning meeting a large crowd of neighbors (about 125) cited numerous reasons for their opposition to the retreat including wanting a guarantee that the camp would not

increase crime and other problems in the area. At several points the crowd erupted in laughter at the answers given by woman asking to start the camp. The zoning board voted against the religious retreat camp.

- **“** 40 Neighbors win to fight to halt housing for abused women” 7/24/03 Press Enterprise The zoning board denied plans for transitional housing for abused women after residents voice opposition. Opposed residents cite worries about attracting live-in boyfriends, angry ex-husbands, neglected children, and an increase in drugs and crime.

Cycle of Prejudice and Oppression



Credit to Bailey Jackson & Rita Hardiman
Adapted by Joan Olsson 1988
Cultural Bridges RD1 Box 171 W. Edmeston NY 13485

A Closer Look at “Isms”

HOMOPHOBIA

It was from listening especially to battered women, women of color and lesbians that I drew the connection between homophobia and violence against women and finally the overall connection to economics and sexism. We have said for a long time in the battered women's movement that all of our truth is found in our stories, and certainly I have found this to be so, for in the stories of battered women I have learned the truth of the interconnectedness of all oppressions and how they are connected to my life as a lesbian.
-Suzanne Pharr (from the Introduction to Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism)

DEFINITIONS

Homophobia, which has its roots in sexism, is the irrational fear of lesbian women and gay men and the hatred, disgust and prejudice that fear brings.

Heterosexism – is the sexual attraction to the opposite sex. An institutionalized response that assumes that all people are heterosexual.

Examples:

Legal: Few states have laws protecting lesbians/gays from discrimination. If the woman is a lesbian it will have a detrimental effect on any case in which she is involved, such as custody, rape or battering.

Employment: Most lesbians are not "out" on the job for fear of ostracism or loss of the job (especially in jobs working with children). The fear of blackmail is constant for those in public office or positions of power.

Public Attitudes: TV, books, magazines, movies, jokes and stories are riddled with oppressive attitudes and stereotypes. Heterosexist comments about Dykes and Fags are accepted and laughed at by most people.

Psychiatry and Medicine: Until recently, homosexuality was diagnosed as an illness by the psychiatric profession. Many doctors continue to treat it in this manner. Within the medical profession, doctors and clinics rarely have information and treatments specific to a lesbian.

Religion: The bible and other holy books contain a few passages that can be interpreted as disallowing homosexuality. Homophobic people latch onto these

passages, ignoring other indications that would contradict their attitudes.

Family: Many lesbians and gay men face extreme difficulty when dealing with their families. A lesbian may be rejected by her family and therefore cut off from support and stability.

Attack: The extreme of heterosexism is scapegoating or the blame for society's ills on lesbians and gay men. Violence, discrimination and public attacks are common occurrences in the lives of homosexuals.

Invisibility: There have been lesbians in every era of history, in every country of country of the world, and almost everyone has a lesbian friend, acquaintance or family member. Yet, lesbians remain invisible due to the stereotyping and misconceptions inherent in heterosexism. Invisibility is a critical part of heterosexist oppression.

-Adapted from: Teaching Empowerment, Schecter;
Homophobia and Heterosexism, M. Smith

HOMOPHOBIC LEVELS OF ATTITUDE:

Repulsion - Homosexuality is seen as a 'crime against nature". Gays are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc., and anything is justified to change them.

Pity - Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is more mature and preferred; any possibility of becoming straight is reinforced and those who are born "that way" are pitied.

Tolerance -Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most "grow out oft'. This assumes that gays are less mature than heterosexuals and they should be treated with protectiveness and indulgence and should not be given positions of authority.

Acceptance - Still implies there is something to accept, i.e. "You're not a gay to me; you're a person;"" What you do in bed is your own business;" "That's fine as long as you don't flaunt it." Such statements ignore the pain of invisibility and stress of closet behavior.

Current Attitudes

Below are survey results from a study conducted in 2000 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago:

85% respondents support equal employment opportunities for lesbians and gay men.

Support is less enthusiastic when asked about specific occupations:

54% believe that lesbians/gay men should hired as elementary teachers,
13% as clergy, 34% as physicians.
52% of respondents regard same sex relationships as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.
54% favored legalization of consensual same-sex relationships, while 42% opposed it.
54% respondents stated that homosexual behavior is always wrong.

Source: http://pscyology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/prej_prev.html

EXAMINATIONS OF ATTITUDES FOR HETEROSEXUALS

Homophobia is such an integral part of our society, many of us behave homophobically without even realizing it. For instance, when dealing with a woman, we may automatically assume she is heterosexual, refer to her partner as a male and make other basic assumptions about her lifestyle, thereby excluding her from what we see as "normal".

There are many ways we contribute to the homophobia in our society. For example, when we hear a biased joke, we may laugh uncomfortably, or just remain silent, instead of challenging the person telling the joke. Some of us respond to homophobic questions about our sexuality by emphasizing our own heterosexuality. Or, we may speak out against homophobia by stating, 'I'm not a lesbian, but ..." These are all subtle ways of condoning society's depiction of homosexuality as abnormal or unacceptable.

Moreover, many women propagate this unfair view by avoiding contact with lesbians. 'I don't want her to make a pass at me," some women will say. This is irrational fear. Women don't? avoid men for fear of sexual advances. In fact, most women feel confident in their ability to ward off such advances. Ironically, men who are often larger and stronger than women, pose a great risk in terms of sexual assault than do other women.

Heterosexual women may also fear any kind of association with lesbians – "'If I am seen with her, people will think I'm a lesbian." This idea of "guilt by association" is extremely damaging. I n order to be guilty, one must have done something wrong. So, women who shun lesbians for fear of their own reputations are essentially telling the world that they think lesbians in some way are depraved.

When we allow others to continue persecuting lesbians, and when we allow unreasonable fears to alienate us from lesbians, we place restrictions on our own opportunities for personal growth and positive change. We basically confine ourselves to only certain "types" of friends and acquaintances. Consequently we miss out on ever knowing an entire sector of the female population.

Homophobia works to the detriment of all women because it divides us when we need to work together to end the oppression of women. And that central issue underlines the common ground we all stand on - we are all women.

Myths and Homosexuality

Myth: Homosexuality is an unnatural act.

Fact: If homosexuality were "unnatural", heterosexuality would not need to be so vigorously enforced in our legal system, by organized religion and by psychiatry. The current psychological thinking is that we are all born bisexual. Under the veneer of what we've been taught to be, all of us probably have both heterosexual and homosexual feelings. Most people are only in touch with their heterosexual feelings, but it has been found that approximately 40% of American men and 15% of American women have had sexual experiences with members of the same sex. Approximately 10% of American men and women are exclusively homosexual. Homosexual behavior between consenting adults is as natural as heterosexual behavior, although not as prevalent.

Myth: Homosexuals are obsessed with sex.

Fact: Homosexuality is both a sexual and affectionate preference for members of the same sex. Homosexuality is intimacy, only one part of which is sexual.

Myth: All lesbians hate men. Gay men hate women.

Fact: Homosexuality is no more connected with hating the opposite sex than heterosexuality is with bad feelings for our same sex. The overwhelming majority of homosexuals have had positive sexualrelationships with the opposite sex.

-Adapted from work by Patty Coleman

Lesbian Battering

The subject of lesbian battering is a difficult one for lesbians and "straight" women alike. Our first thought may be that homosexuality does not relate to wife battering. However, some victims who call may have had some homosexual experiences in the past or may be presently living with a lesbian partner. They may be experiencing abuse by a male ex-lover or ex-husband or by their current lover---abuse does exist within lesbian relationships. The situation of the homosexual battered woman in general is magnified by society's prejudice against the homosexual minority.

The lesbian facing a problem often receives criticism from her family and society, which in fact may respond with hostility if she is known to be homosexual. She may face loss of her job and home as well as social ostracism.

As a counselor, you must be careful not to make judgments about anyone's sexual preference or lifestyle, just as you do not communicate other types of prejudice. Many lesbians do not call battered women's hotlines because they fear the attitudes of the counselors there, but they may call if the counselors are open to listening to them and supporting their right to choose their own lifestyle. Also women in a homosexual relationship who calls usually will not share information about her sexual identity right away. If your attitude is judgmental you will not be able to form a trusting relationship with her or to help her and you may never know why. By active listening and being sensitive to this issue you will become an effective counselor for lesbian women.

-From Counseling the Abuse Victim, by Linda Straw for PCADV

Providing Effective, Supportive Services to Battered Lesbian Women

For many in the battered women's movement, the concept of lesbian battering has been difficult to understand. It does not fit neatly into our view of men battering women. We need to be prepared to offer effective and supportive services to lesbians, acknowledging the similarities and differences that exist between lesbian and non-lesbian women and their situations.

When answering the hotline, we need to keep in mind that the caller may be a lesbian. Some lesbians are not "out" about who they are; a lesbian might say that she is with a man (even when she is not) in order to feel safe enough to make the call. All hotline workers need to be sensitive to this possibility when counseling a caller.

It is also important to use inclusive language. Lesbians are already excluded, silenced and made invisible in every corner of life. We must make every effort to ensure that we are not among the many institutions that intimidate and deny services to lesbians. We may be the only place she can turn for shelter and support. Imagine, then, how a battered lesbian might feel if she called the Women's Center and the counselor who answered the phone referred to her batterer as her "husband" or "boyfriend" and then asked what "he" did to her. In order to avoid alienating the woman, try to initially use neutral terms, referring to the batterer as her "partner" and talking about the "relationship", as opposed to the "marriage". If the caller is a "-lesbian, she is more likely to feel comfortable if the counselor uses more inclusive language.

The most important thing to remember when counseling a battered lesbian is that she has experienced the same fear, loss of self-esteem, confusion and other feelings as any other battered woman. **Battered lesbians are battered women.**

Power and control issues are as much present in their relationships as in battering heterosexual relationships.

When counseling a battered lesbian consider that she is dealing with her abuser, and homophobic world. Many lesbians are not "out", so it is often important to safeguard that woman's privacy. On the other hand, it is not

appropriate to expect a lesbian to keep her sexual preference a 'secret" in order to avoid conflict with residents or avoid discrimination regarding housing, social services or legal actions. Such a request would be considered discrimination and would send the message that the woman should be ashamed of her sexuality, when, in reality, it is the homophobic people who should be ashamed.

Because she is a lesbian, a woman may have special concerns about her abuser. While a heterosexual batterer may threaten to take the children, a lesbian batterer may threaten to reveal her partner's sexuality to her e x-husband, and thereby threaten her ability to retain custody of her children. Similarly, the batterer may threaten to jeopardize her job by telling her employer.

A lesbian coming to the shelter needs to know that it is OK for her to be there and that there will be support for her. Whether her batterer is her ex-husband/boyfriend or her partner, she needs to be able to talk about all aspects of her feelings about her relationships with her batterer, her lover (if different) and her children (if she has any). Staff and other residents should be careful not to assume that a woman has become a lesbian as a result of having been battered by a man. If possible, we should be prepared to refer the woman to other lesbian resources in the community if she doesn't want to stay in a shelter with all non-lesbian women or if the shelter is not a supportive place for her. We want to make sure that she is not left alone to deal with homophobia in the shelter, whether or not it is directed at her.

Most women have the potential to be allies and to be supportive of each other in all kinds of situations. As part of our work of empowering women, we need to be aware of and actively combat all of the ways that women have been divided from each other.

-Adapted from an excerpt from For Shelter and Beyond, by M. Smith

Counseling Concerns

When counseling women of color, it is important to remember that they probably come from different background and possess a different set of experiences than Caucasian women. In addition to examining one's own prejudices and misconceptions, it is important to consider the effect that racism may play in the woman's life.

Battered women of color face the difficulty of being doubly oppressed. Not only are they abused by their partners, but also by a society that treats them as inferior and denies them opportunities. In our community, this is complicated by the fact that we are demographically homogeneous: whites comprise the vast majority. Consequently, women of color encounter alienation, having few people of color with whom to associate and receive support. Caucasian women will surround a woman of color who enters our shelter. So it is important to be sensitive to other feelings beyond those related to her victimization.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

The reasons given to African American women by African American men for why they batter their wives or girlfriends are often similar to those given to the majority of battered women. The response of African American women to the violence they have experienced is also similar to what most battered women exhibit. Nevertheless, the factors influencing domestic violence in African American families may be unique to the particular situation they face in American society. "Violence may be one issue on a list of many that African American women are coping with at any given time. Some do not even rank it as the most important, generational cycles of abuse in families and communities have served to normalize some of these behaviors. Many African American women also view traditional domestic violence services as extensions of a system that has sought to keep them opposed. The mistrust extends to individuals who are deemed to be part of the system. Both African American women and men are taught to be leery of government and social service agencies. When a Black woman calls the police and participates in the prosecution of her batterer, it is frequently seen as disloyal and deliberately placing a partner in a system that holds a dim view of both of them." [13] Understanding these issues will increase your effectiveness as a counselor.

LATINA WOMEN

The effectiveness of Latino organizations in dealing with battered women is sometimes limited by the strong emphasis that the culture places on family privacy. In addition, because the Latina woman often lacks the opportunity to obtain employment, or does not have the transportation or income that would allow her to spend more time out of the home, she is forced to become extremely dependent on her husband. Because of her dependence, she is reluctant to talk to outsiders about domestic violence, which leads to secrecy and avoidance of the problem. Even the personnel in ethnic-identified agencies sometimes have trouble admitting that wife abuse may exist in their minority community, for fear that this admission may reinforce some of the negative cultural stereotypes falsely adhered to by the majority.

ASIAN WOMEN

In order to understand the situation of battered women in the Asian communities, it is important to emphasize that there are many distinct Pan Asian groups in the U.S., each with its own language, cultural heritage and adjustment problems. Some groups, like the Chinese, have deep historical roots in America, while the Vietnamese, who are more recent immigrants, have very different obstacles confronting them. In addition, the previous conflicts between some Asian groups have not been resolved upon entry in the U.S., and there presently exists a definite hierarchy of cultural groups with accompanying rivalries and conflicts. The Asian communities are closely knit and insular, which makes the

recognition of domestic violence difficult. Particular for the older generation, there is a fear of bringing shame onto the family group if they talk about their problems. Some Asian women who are married to American servicemen are afraid they will be deported if they admit to being battered, while the more recent arrivals, like the Vietnamese, are not familiar with our laws and are afraid to call police.

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

It is important to remember that in all probability battering, like child abuse and alcoholism, was traditionally unheard of among most Native American tribes. As far as we know, Native American women today are affected by wife battering neither more nor less than other women are; however, their needs are different in terms of services.

The Stigma of Mental Illness

"Among people who have been treated for mental illness, what is the biggest problem they face when trying to resume life in the community?

Most will say it is simply their inability to be accepted by other people. They have difficulty finding friends, housing, and work. They feel the sting of discrimination in almost everything they attempt.

They are victims of the stigma that still surrounds mental illness. Numerous scientific studies have shown that stigma, often overt, is directed toward former mental patients by society. It becomes their most debilitating handicap. " (1)

A stigma is a negative way of labeling an individual with a mental illness. People who label often do so because they lack information and feel uncomfortable when interfacing with someone suffering from a mental disorder. Often individuals and their families feel discouraged and do not seek the help they need. (2)

"An estimated 22.1% of Americans age 18 + older about 1 in 5 adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Another study revealed that 4 of the 10 leading causes of disability in the United States are mental disorders including major depression, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Many people suffer from more then one mental condition at a given time." (3)

Did you know?

"Single mothers face twice the risk of depression as do married mothers."(4)

Another event that may endanger mental health is a life-threatening trauma, such as domestic violence and sexual assault. In some cases, the experience may result in the survivor developing post-traumatic stress disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an extreme emotional and behavioral reaction to a terrifying event that a person may have experienced or witnessed. The event causes the survivor to feel intense fear and an overwhelming feeling of helplessness. (5)

Did you know?
49% of rape victims experience posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (5)
23.7 % of other sexual assault survivors develop PTSD (5)
31.9% of domestic violence survivors experience PTSD (5)
7.3% of witness to a killing or serious injury develop PTSD (5)

Domestic violence has many other mental health consequences for survivors including depression, suicide, eating disorders, and substance abuse. Children who witness domestic violence may experience acute and long-term emotional disturbances, including nightmares, depression, learning difficulties, and aggressive behavior." (4)

Substance Abuse and Battered Women

"Evidence suggest that women use substances differently then men. Compared to men, women are more likely to use substances to self-medicate and cope with trauma, and are less likely to use substances as an instrument of aggression. Growing up as a victim or an observer of violence increases the risk for substance abuse as an adult. Compared to women who do not abuse substances, women who do, have experienced a higher incidence of violence as children, and continue to experience significantly more verbal and physical violence as adults." (6)

Violence as a Risk Factor for Incarceration

"My crime--being addicted to alcohol and drugs. My crime-being a survivor of domestic violence. My crime-- being a survivor of incest. My crime --being an American Indian woman." *(7)*

"Government surveys of state and federal prisoners estimate that 43% to 57% of women in state and federal prisons have been physically or sexually abused at some time in their lives. One third of incarcerated women report sexual abuse as a child, 20% to 34% report adult intimate partner abuse, they experience multiple cases of abuse and are three to four times more likely than male prisoners to have experienced domestic violence and sexual assault." (7) In comparison to women not imprisoned, the rate of victimization may not appear significantly higher but underreporting may play a key role in accurately reflecting the prevalence of abuse among incarcerated women.

Other research suggests that the incidence of domestic violence and sexual assault is considerably higher with a smaller sample and in-depth screening tool. The results of a study of 150 women imprisoned at a maximum-security facility in New York State found that 94% of women reported severe domestic and sexual violence during their lives. (7)

Did you know?

54% of girls incarcerated in the U. S. juvenile correctional facilities have been sexually abuses, 61% had been physically abused and the majority had been multiple times. (8)

Over 80% of girls run away from home and over half attempt suicide (8)

Abused women may be at a higher risk for incarceration

As a result of abuse, many women and girls are placed at risk for imprisonment. Initially, they enter the criminal justice system as victims and then become offenders from the viewpoint of the justice system. Their victimization is overlooked and the focus shifts to their crime with little regard of the circumstance. Some battered women are forced to commit crimes due to the dynamics of an abusive relationship. Women may be coerced to steal, carry or obtain drugs for their abusive partners, sell drugs or resort to prostitution as a means of financing their escape. They provide fraudulent information to social service agencies and law enforcement as a means of survival. Other domestic violence victims may commit economic crimes such as forgery, writing bad checks, or be forced to overextend their credit with no means of repaying their incurred debt. Women are also criminal charged with assault and other crimes when they are forced to fight off their batterer's attacks. Law enforcement may not recognize self-defense injuries and charge both parties. To further compound this issue, battered women are pressured by prosecutors and their defense attorney into plea-bargaining for a reduced sentence even when wrongly arrested. With a criminal record, women may incur difficulties when seeking employment, risk deportation, and lose economic benefits such as welfare, and food stamps. The justice system also does not acknowledge the history of abuse when deciding the fate of battered women who kill their abusive partners in self-defense. They are not viewed as "good victims" who are terrorized by their batterers but instead as women who exerted too much force. When prosecuted the focus will be on her behaviors and not the batterers or the abuse. Sue Osthoff, from the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women estimated that 75-80% of battered women who kill during an ongoing confrontation are convicted. **In 1991, there were 2000 battered women in America who were serving prison time for defending their lives against their batterers.** [8]

Another option employed by some abused women is leaving and becoming homeless. Homeless women are at risk for being arrested for offenses such as loitering, solicitation and disorderly conduct. Police may presume that homeless women are prostitutes and addicts and automatically arrest them as part of their efforts to crack down on crime. Women appear to be more susceptible to being charged with these offenses then men.

Women living on the street may also be forced into prostitution. Others may choose prostitution because it may be their only economic means of surviving without having to return to an abusive relationship.

Working with Battered Non-Citizen Women

Women and children comprise approximately two-thirds of all legal non-citizens in the United States. Non-citizen women face many discrimination obstacles based on their race, gender, and immigration status. Research suggests that that many of these women and children are isolated and trapped in abusive relationships. [12]

Women who are non-citizens may be reluctant to seek services because they believe they will be sent away or turned over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). However, non-profit charitable organizations have no legal obligation to inquire about immigration status of persons who seek their services, nor do they have a legal obligation to report to the INS.

A woman need not be a citizen or a legal permanent resident to get a Protection from Abuse Order (PFA). An immigrant woman can also get a divorce, although this may affect her residency status. Under the 1994 Federal Violence Against Women Act, special protections are provided for aliens, including suspension of deportation for battered spouses and children.

Ageism

WHEN I AM AN OLD WOMAN I SHALL WEAR PURPLE

When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple
With a red hat that doesn't suit me
and I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
and satin sandals and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I am tired
And gobble up samples in shops
And run my stick along the public railing
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall sit in my slippers in the rain
And pick the flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.
You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go-
Or only bread and pickles for a week
And hoard pencils and pens and thugs in boxes.
But meanwhile we must stay respectable
And must not shame the children:
They mind more, even than we do, being noticeable.
We will keep dry with sensible clothes
And spend according to good value
And do what's best for us and our children...
But maybe I ought to practice a little now
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old and start to wear purple.
-By Jenny Joseph

Ageism, like sexism, classism, homophobia and racism, is part of a larger problem that prevails in our country-the systematic exclusion of certain groups of people from the process of shaping the community they live in and establishing a

humane set of values. Ageism brings with it a collection of myths and stereotypes that serve to silence older people. As a result, young women do not connect with older women and are therefore deprived of their knowledge. Ageism removes older women from the mainstream and enables us to ignore the sad fate of older people in our society.

Examining Attitudes

Ageism, as it relates to institutional, medical, legal and employment issues, is easy enough to recognize. Older people are constantly discriminated against as our society places its emphasis on and trust in the "younger generation". The results of ageism are devastating, especially to women. According to Ms. magazine (July/August 1990), 'Worldwide, senior women are the poorest of the poor; in this country senior women are the largest adult poverty group; 40.2% of senior African American women are poor." Ageism, then, is a feminist issue.

Ageism is an attitude. It has to do with the way we view older people, and consequently, the way we treat them. For instance, many people view older women as "grandmotherly". When we make such closely defined assessments of older women, we place limits on how we expect them to behave, and what kind of relationship we can have with them. We eliminate the possibility of a friendship and, in so doing; we fail to regard them as equals.

We often put older people on a pedestal. We ask older women to tell their "herstories," but we rarely ask their opinions about the here and now. We basically assume that their time is in the past, which is finished, and that they have no stake in the present or the future. This assumption prohibits older women from becoming actively involved in matters that directly affect them. Their voices are silenced and their presence negated.

The greatest impediment to equality for older women is the condescending attitude taken by many toward them. Older women are often treated like children: Their opinions are minimized, their actions restrained and their serious concerns dismissed. Such behavior is the product of society's stereotype of older people as senile, foolish and weak. Unfortunately, for many old women, the most patronizing people are their own children.

The best way to combat ageism is to realize that older women have a great deal in common with younger women. The victimization of women, as seen in battering, rape and poverty, occurs regardless of age. Moreover, those issues which effect the elderly today will effect younger women in the future. Ageism is everyone's problem.

Domestic Violence Against the Elderly

During the 1960’s, America "discovered" child abuse; In the 1970’s, we "uncovered" spouse abuse and in the l980’s, we have became aware of elderly abuse. While elderly abuse has always happened, the problem is more pressing than ever due to the increase in life expectancy. A growing number of people are

reaching 75 years and older, the time when they are particularly vulnerable to infirmities and less able to manage without assistance. It is estimated that by the year 2030, more U.S. citizens will be over sixty-five than under the age of eighteen. Research also suggest the number of seniors residing in the United States in 1990 is expected to double by the year 2030 to seventy million. Another noteworthy statistic is that Pennsylvania is home to the second largest population of older people.

Millions of Americans now live well beyond their normal economically productive years. With retirement usually coming between the ages of 60 and 65, an ever-growing number of Americans live at least a decade on fixed incomes, often outliving their savings. Left without resources, many must move in with others, usually family. Once they are with other people. Usually physically stronger, they are vulnerable to maltreatment. Additionally, because a person's major identity in America is his or her job, retired persons lose status, power, and prestige that goes with being "economically productive" members of society. Unlike child abuse, where the victim comes in contact with teachers, doctors and others, the elderly are often completely isolated. Doctors and administrators may be reluctant to report suspected abuse. They may attribute bruises and broken bones to a fall, or they may disregard the story of an elderly victim, ascribing it to senility. Another difficulty results from the reluctance of the elderly to either report or prosecute the crime. They may fear retaliation or further abuse, fear isolation from the abuser, who may be the sole source of care and shelter; or feel embarrassed or guilty about being a victim. Some elderly victims may be afraid that while disclosing their abuse, they will expose declining cognitive or emotional functioning. Others are physically incapable of leaving their home or reaching a telephone. Because of their increased dependence on their caregivers, the elderly must rely on others to report their victimization.

--Adapted from Westmoreland County Women's Services

Did you Know?

- **Nationally, reported cases of battering within the aging population more than double from 1986 to 1994.**
- **2/3 of elder domestic violence abuse victims are women**
- **More than 50% of reported elder abuse cases are perpetrated by family members, with 14-15% by the spouse**
- **18% of injury visits by women over 60 are prompted by domestic violence**

Religious Concerns

I recognize no rights but human rights--- I know nothing of men's rights and women's rights; for in (God) there is neither male nor female. It is my solemn conviction that, until this principal of equality is recognized and embodied in practice, the church can do nothing effectual for the permanent reformation of the world.

--Angelina Grimke, abolitionist and advocate for women's rights, 1836

Battered women and sexual assault victims who seek help from a domestic violence/sexual assault agency may have religious concerns related to their abuse and/or they may have sought assistance from a pastor or other church member. This section provides insight that may aid you in addressing religious concerns.

Religious Issues: Roadblocks or Resources?

The crisis of domestic violence affects people physically, psychologically and spiritually. Treatment of families experiencing violence requires integrating the needs of the whole person. Therefore, it is important to develop a shared understanding and cooperation between secular and religious counselors.
Social services workers often wonder, "Why bother with religious concerns?" The answer is quite clear: religious concerns, which surface for people in the midst of crisis, are primary issues. If not addressed, they will inevitably become roadblocks to the victim's efforts to resolve the crisis and move on with life. Additionally, a person's religious beliefs and community can provide a major support system during difficult times.

For a pastor, priest, rabbi or lay counselor, practical issues may seem less critical than religious ones. Consequently, they may doubt the importance of dealing with concerns for shelter, safety and intervention. The view that "these people just need to get right with God and everything will be fine oversimplifies the problem and underestimates the potential lethality of domestic violence.

When confronted with personal experience of domestic violence, most people have religious or philosophical life questions. Questions such as *"Why is this happening to me?"*or *"Why did God let this happen?"* or "*What meaning does this have for my life?*" are all indications of an effort to make sense of experiences of suffering. Such introspection is a healthy sign that people are trying to comprehend and contextualize their experiences, and thereby regain control of their lives.

For many individuals and families questions of meaning will be expressed in religious terms. In the U.S. these will take the form of Jewish or Christian traditions because the Judeo-Christian values permeate our culture and influence the thought of the majority of people, whether or not they are religious. How these are interpreted will determine whether religion is a roadblock or a resource to victims.

The misinterpretation and misuse of the Jewish and Christian traditions

have often had a detrimental effect on families, particularly those dealing with domestic violence. Misunderstanding can contribute substantially to the guilt, self-blame and suffering which victims experience and to the rationalizations often voiced by abusers. "But the Bible says" is frequently used by abusers to explain, excuse or justify their behavior and, consequently, to control the victims. Re-examining and analyzing those Biblical references that have been misused can lead to reclaiming the traditions in a way that supports victims and challenges abusers.

Another potential roadblock in modern religious teachings is the attempt to teach that there are very simple answers to the very complex issues which people face in their lives. Thus, religious groups have often not adequately prepared people for the traumas which they will face at some point in their lives: illness, death, abuse, divorce and so forth.

"Keep the commandments and everything will be fine."
"Keep praying."
"Just accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you will be healthy, prosperous, popular and happy."
"Go to services each week."
"Pray harder."

While these teachings may be fundamental teachings of religious faith, alone they are inadequate to deal with complicated experiences of suffering. Furthermore, they blame the victim for her/his own suffering---*"If you are a good Christian/Jew, God will treat you kindly or take care of you."* or *"If you suffer, it is a sign that you must not be a good Christian/Jew and God is displeased with you."* The assumption that God's love is conditional sets the victim up to feel punished or abandoned by God. In reality, it is the teachings of their specific congregation that have been inadequate to their needs.

Religious teachings are helpful when they acknowledge the complexity, the paradox and the incomprehensible nature of experiences in contemporary life. A church or synagogue can serve as a resource by providing support to those who are suffering, offering a sign of God's presence and being amenable to struggling with the questions which difficult experiences raise. Offering sweet words of advice to "solve" life's problems reduces a difficult experience to a mere slogan and denies the depth of the pain and the potential for healing and a new life.

Cooperative Roles for Counselor and Minister/Rabbi

Both the secular counselor and the minister or rabbi have important roles to play in response to domestic violence and sexual assault. Victims need the support and expertise of both during times of crisis. However, the efforts of the two sometimes come into conflict, as in the following situation:

A badly beaten woman comes into the shelter saying that her minister told her to go back home to her husband. The shelter worker is horrified. Later, the woman tells her minister that the shelter worker told her to get a divorce. The minister is horrified.

In the above case, both the shelter worker and the minister had the best interests of the victim in mind. Yet they were clearly at odds with each other because they did not understand each other's concerns-the minister's interest in maintaining the family and the shelter worker's interest in assuring the woman's safety. The need for cooperation between counselors and minister/rabbis is crucial in order to best utilize both religious and secular resources.

Role of the Secular Counselor

- ✓ Pay attention to religious questions/comments/references.
- ✓ Affirm these concerns as appropriate and check out their importance to the victim.
- ✓ If you are uncomfortable with these concerns or feel uncomfortable dealing with them, refer to a pastor/priest/rabbi who is trained to help. The Women's Center is another available resource.
- ✓ If you are comfortable and would like to pursue the concern, do so, emphasizing the ways in which the person's religious tradition can be a resource to her/him and but cannot be a way to justify or allow the abuse to continue.

Role of the Clergy

- ✓ Be aware of the dynamics of domestic violence and utilize this understanding in evaluating the situation.
- ✓ Use religious expertise to illuminate the positive value of religious traditions while clarifying that they do not justify or condone abuse.
- ✓ Identify the parishioner's immediate needs and refer to a secular resource

Rural Women

Rural women are perhaps the most isolated populations within the Battered Women's Movement. The Women's Center strives to reach rural women through our satellite offices, the Medical Advocacy Programs, and prevention education awareness activities.

Describing Rural Experience: The Obstacles

The issues and concerns of rural women are many and varied, but geographical isolation is perhaps the most profound and fundamental to both the battered woman and the service provider. The nearest neighbor may be several miles away. The rural battered woman may not have phone service; any phones

available to her may have no direct dial, with every call a toll call. There usually is no public transportation, so she must rely upon a private vehicle, often belonging to her abuser. She may not have a driver's license. Often her trips to town are extremely limited. Geographic isolation compounds emotional isolation. Battering remains a personally perceived problem where women cannot come together, talk and share their experience.

Limited resources are the second most cited obstacle in the rural experience. For the battered woman, most areas limited-jobs, childcare, housing, health care, social services, legal/judicial resources. Assess to economic resources and information is also limited. She has no immediate access to police and courts are open limited hours. Community consciousness about battering is often poor, and what resources do exist may be less accessible.

Extreme weather conditions often exaggerate isolation. Cold, snow and mud regularly monitor the pace of life and may extend periods of isolation with the abuser. Poor roads further limits transportation. Seasonal work may also mean many months of unemployment on a regular basis and result in women being trapped with their abusers for long periods of time.

Hunting weapons are common to many homes, and most rural people know how to use them. Guns are usually unregistered rifles and shotguns. Everyday tools are also potential, accessible weapons: axes, chains, and chainsaws.

The alcoholism rate is high in rural areas. Drinking is more likely to take place in the home where the only person the drinker has to interact with, is his victim. Alcohol use increases in winter months when people are unemployed and isolated in their homes. A typical pattern: he drinks, she watches him drinking and gets nervous, he sees her becoming tense, and the stage is set for a violent incident.

The "big city" (even as small as 20,000) is intimidating to the rural battered woman who must leave her home to find safety. She leaves her informal support system, her children's school, her job and all that is familiar. City attitudes may seem strange and unaccepting of her ways. Traveling to the city for services creates a new, additional crisis.

Describing Rural Experience: The Options

While the above issues pose many obstacles, rural battered women and service providers have been resourceful in dealing with them. We have developed community systems and cooperative networks outside the traditional models of service delivery. In addition, a strong sense of community is derived from people knowing each other and depending on each other. The more remote the area, the more pronounced survival issues become and the less class distinctions may exist; middle class and working class living side by side and may lead similar lifestyles.

Though unspoken and unseen, the fact that battering exists in a given home is often well known in rural communities. Friends are neighbors and neighbors are friends. A complex web of interrelationships exists, with everyone knowing

everyone else. Community peer pressure is strong, and once the battered woman decides to take action, she often finds support.

Unlike urban programs, worker anonymity often does not exist. While this may pose a level of danger, it is usually a factor that serves rural programs well. Volunteers represent a diverse sampling of the communities served, and this results in more one-on-one public education. Because local women are known and trusted, knowledge of their volunteer affiliation keeps the issue and the availability of services in public view. A broad volunteer base also facilitates the fundraising and networking processes.

Rural battered women often turn to informal support systems as the most familiar and accessible resources in times of crisis. Large, supportive families may offer more shelter options for the battered woman, though sometimes the community presence of a large family, rather than intimidating the abuser, may work to intimidate the battered woman into reconciliation or inaction. Informal networks may include neighborhood watches or signal systems. Neighbors are aware of each others' schedules and travels, or a certain light may signal a neighbor that it's not safe and to come for coffee. C. B. 's can be used instead of telephone service for assistance, transportation or to track the abuser.

Support groups for battered women have not always worked well in rural communities due to transportation problems; however, alternatives have been developed. Many programs employ callback systems where the woman is re-contacted at one-month intervals. Other programs maintain a list of abuse survivors who are able to "buddy" with women in current crisis. This system offers a local, supportive person and may supplement direct program services. Other programs use support contacts following shelter services, for re-entry into the local community.

Because transportation in the vast geographic areas served by rural programs presents numerous difficulties, knowledge of who does transport and networking with those service providers is essential. They usually include protective workers, visiting nurses, church groups, senior citizens organizations and home health aides. State police have been known to provide transportation to a shelter or emergency medical facility. Volunteers may meet a woman in a public place, or, if none is available arrange to pick her up as she walks down the road from her home.

The Church plays a central role in many rural communities. Networking with church leaders and church groups is important to the survival of rural battered women's programs. This is often a difficult balance, as programs must both educate churches about the issues and rely on them for donations. Churches have not traditionally supported the feminist definition of women's role in our society; however, they have proved an important source of funds and volunteers in our communities.

-Adapted from the work of Nancy Gentile

It’s Called The Rural Experience

It's really
Just as you imagine.

The woman
Dragging and crying
Two children
Is panting as she stumbles
Along the deer trail
That leads down the back behind
The neighbors.

Inside, with slow deliberation,

He is pulling on his boots
And finding the flashlight
And finally,
When she does hear him coming,
He is moving much faster
Than they can go.

In town,
He catches her again on the way to the
Discount store,
And four counties buzz
About the power of the hunting rifle that
Blew clean through.

Three of us from the shelter
Drive an hour to go over,
And
At the funeral,
A man reads the survivors;
First sons, then daughters;
Father, then mother;
Brothers, sister;
Paternal, then maternal
Grandfathers, grandmothers.

The first man to view the body
Wears a shiny, crimson red windbreaker
With a Razorback Hog snarling across his back,
And even some of the pallbearers
Don't wear suit coats--the family is so poor.

But, many women have already dropped by plates of food
To offer as hospitality to those
Who stop by to call,

And the funeral director's wife
Has put up a display of
China cups and china saucers
Near the registry.

A woman's quarter, accompanied by a slide steel guitar; sings
"Just Inside the Eastern Gate"
and that does seem nice
because she loved country music.
I think it really must be the same-wife beating
in the city or the country.

For me personally,
I can't tell the difference in
The horror of screaming and
No one coming to help
And
The horror of screaming
And no one hearing at all.
by Linda Walker

DIFFERENTLY ABLED WOMEN

The term **differently abled** is proposed as a substitute for **disabled, handicapped or challenged**. The purpose of this substitution is to emphasize the positive aspect of the particular challenge.

The Women's Center, Inc. of Columbia/Montour Counties proposes that we look beyond the disability and look at the individual's ability and capability. **Anyone** can be affected by domestic violence or sexual assault. Statistics show that differently abled women are victimized at even higher rates.

Positive language empowers. When writing or speaking about people it is important to put the person first. Group designations such as "the Blind" or "the Disabled" are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities.

Women with disabilities experience the highest rate of personal violence – violence at the hands of spouses, partners, boyfriends, family members, caregivers, and strangers – of any group in our society today. Yet, they are often invisible in the crime statistics. Frequently they find community services such as domestic and sexual violence programs inadequately prepared to fully understand and meet their needs. They also face disability service systems that don't clearly see and effectively respond to the violence. They are all to commonly devalued and unsupported because of societal prejudice.

The Women's Center can accommodate most people for legal, medical and counseling services. The shelter, however, has bedrooms on the second and third floor. If a person who is unable to climb stairs needs shelter we will provide transportation if necessary to the closest accessible shelter which is currently in Pottsville, PA.

Ten Commandments of Etiquette
for
Communicating with People with Disabilities

- When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial

limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)

- ❖ When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking. Always tell the person when you are leaving.
- ❖ If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- ❖ Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
- ❖ Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on, or hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
- ❖ When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
- ❖ To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read lips. For those who do lip-read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking.
- ❖ Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
- ❖ Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?" That seems to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

National Center for Access Unlimited, 155 North Wacker Drive, Suite 315, Chicago, IL 60606

Guidelines for Dealing with Diversity Issues

- ✓ Avoid anti-"ism" jokes and conversation.
  Such talk serves only to perpetuate discrimination. It also makes it more difficult for people to come to terms with their true being.
- ✓ Create an atmosphere of acceptance.
  Encourage open discussion on issues concerning diversity.
  Don't be afraid of possible tension or conflict.
- ✓ Recognize that confronting "isms" is a long-term struggle.
  The isms won't be eliminated in a day or from one presentation. It's a

constant process of change and growth that make take several generations.

- ✓ Confront "ism" remarks and statements.
  The words colored people, oriental, fags, girls, nigger and dyke should not be tolerated. The expression of anti-"isms" should not go unchallenged. Support acceptance and denounce homophobia, sexism, racism and all forms of bigotry.
- ✓ Make it clear that there is nothing wrong with having friends with different backgrounds other than yours. Openly participate in diversity programs and invite others to join.
- ✓ Acquaint yourself with issues on diversity.
  Include movies with diverse themes on "movie nights". Make it clear that everyone is welcome at all functions. Ask various organizations to speak to your group.
- ✓ Assess your own values about equality and how people should be treated. This is an important starting point in order to understand where you are and where you may want to progress to in your future development.
- ✓ Be a role model.

Sexism

Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less then one-hundredth of the world's property.

Sexism is a negative behavior or attitude directed towards another person based on their gender. Sexism also perpetuates stereotypical assumptions about gender roles. Women are often the targets of sexism.

Our culture reflects societal values. If these values include sexism, then our society in turns devalues women. The practice of sexism has many consequences for women. Sexist attitudes and acceptance of prescribed roles form the basis of violence against women. Such views contribute to the social sanctioning of violence against women in the forms of domestic violence and sexual assault and other types of abuse such as pornography, prostitution and sexual harassment.

Another consequence of sexism includes economic inequalities in the workplace. "Although the 21st century is just around the corner, women now earn, on average only 73 cents for every dollar that men earn according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Over a working lifetime, the wage disparity costs the average American woman an estimated $250,000 in lost wages" [9] In addition to the gender wage gap, women also encounter the glass ceiling at their workplace. Women experience male stereotypes, myths and preconceived notions that hinder advancement in their careers. Women only comprise about five percent of senior management positions in American corporations. They must

also deal with "the good old boys" network when climbing the corporate ladder. Sixty percent of women in senior level positions are in jobs traditionally considered to be female oriented—support services or administrative areas like human resources, public relations, and communication according to one survey. On the other hand, male senior executives are in departments that make money – sales, manufacturing, and product development. [10]

Did you know?

- The highest proportions of college educated working women are in teaching and nursing.
- Neither job appears on the list of the 10 most common occupations for men.
- Women are not prepared to move into better-paying higher-status and faster growing occupations, such as systems analyst, software designer and engineer.
- American women now graduate from high school at higher rates than men and have higher rates of college enrollment.
- Women's participation in the labor force is expected to increase by 15% by 2010. Men's participation is projected to grow by 9%. [14]

"It's not that women are hitting the glass ceiling in the high tech sector. It's that they don't have keys to open the door." [14]

Sexism and the Media

A magazine is not a mirror.
Have you ever seen anyone in a magazine who seemed even vaguely like you looking back? (If you have turn the page)
Most magazines are made to sell us a fantasy of what we're supposed to be. They reflect what society deems to be the standard,
however unrealistic or unattainable that standard is.
That doesn't mean you should cancel your subscription.
It means you need to remember
That it's ink on paper. [11]

HE WORKS, SHE WORKS
BUT WHAT A DIFFERENT IMPRESION THEY MAKE

Have you ever found yourself up against the old double-standard at work? Then you know how annoying it can be and how alone you can feel. Supervisors and co-workers still judge us by old stereotypes that say women are emotional, disorganized and inefficient. Here are some of the most glaring examples of the typical office double standard.

The family picture is on **HIS** desk: Ah, a solid, responsible family man.	The family picture is on **HER** desk: Hmm, her family will come before her career.
HIS desk is cluttered: He's obviously a hard worker and busy.	**HER** desk is cluttered: She's obviously a disorganized scatterbrain.
HE'S talking with co-workers: He must be discussing the latest deal.	**SHE'S** talking with co-workers: She must be gossiping.
HE'S not at his desk: He must be at a meeting.	**SHE'S** not at her desk: She must be in the ladies room.
HE'S not in the office: He's meeting a customer.	**SHE'S** not in the office: She must be out shopping.
HE'S having lunch with the boss: He's on his way up.	**SHE'S** having lunch with the boss: They must be having an affair.
The boss criticized **HIM**: He'll improve his performance	The boss criticized **HER** She'll be very upset.
HE got an unfair deal: Did he get angry?	**SHE** got an unfair deal: Did she cry?
HE'S getting married: He'll get more settled.	**SHE'S** getting married: She'll get pregnant and leave.
HE'S having a baby: He'll need a raise.	**SHE'S** having a baby: She'll cost the company $$$ in benefits.
HE'S leaving for a better job: He's moving up the ladder.	**SHE'S** leaving for a better job: Women are undependable.

Privilege

A poem for men who don't understand what we mean when we say they have it.

Privilege is simple:
Going for a pleasant stroll after dark,
Not checking the back of your car as you get in, sleeping soundly,
Speaking without interruption, and not remembering
Dreams of rape, that follow you all day, that woke you crying, and
Privilege
Is not seeing your stripped, humiliated body
Plastered in celebration across every magazine rack, privilege
Is going to the movies and not seeing yourself
Terrorized, defamed, battered, butchered
Seeing something else
Privilege is
Riding your bicycle across town without being screamed at or
Run off the road, not needing an abortion, taking off your shirt
On a hot day, in a crowd, not wishing you could type better
Just in case, not shaving your legs, having a decent job and
Expecting to keep it, not feeling the boss's hand up your crotch,
Dozing off on late-night buses, privilege
Is being the hero in the TV show not the dumb broad,
Living where your genitals are totemized not denied,
Knowing your doctor won't rape you
Privilege is being
Smiled at all day by nice helpful women, it is the way you pass judgement on their appearance with magisterial authority,
The way you face a judge of your own sex in court, and
Are over-represented in Congress and are not strip-searched for a traffic ticket,
Or used as a dartboard by your friendly mechanic,
Privilege
Is seeing your bearded face reflected through the history texts,
Not only of your high school days but all your life, not being
Relegated to paragraph
Every other chapter, the way you occupy
Entire volumes of poetry and more of your share of the couch unchallenged,
It is your mouthing smug atrocious insults at women .
who blink and change the subject-politely-
Privilege
Is how seldom the rapist's name appears in the papers, and the way you smirk over your PLAYBOY
It's simple really, privilege
Means someone else's pain, your wealth
I s my terror, your uniform
Is a woman raped to death here or in Cambodia or wherever
Wherever your obscene privilege
Writes your name in my blood, it's that simple,
You've always had it, that's why it doesn't
Seem to make you sick at stomach,
You have it, we pay for it,
Now do you understand?

Male Victims of Domestic Violence

According to the U.S. Justice Department, as many as 24,000 men per year report being physically assaulted by intimate partners. Yet this accounts for only two to five percent of the battering in abusive relationships, so the emphasis of study and services has been, understandably, on battered women. Male victims suffer fewer physical injuries from abuse, at least in heterosexual relationships, simply because most women cannot hit as hard as men. Also, it appears that men are less likely to stay in abusive relationships for a long period. Some reasons for this are due to social and cultural factors, such as boys being raised to be self-reliant, the primary child-rearing responsibilities being placed on women, and the greater financial resources generally available to men.

Abusive Women

Abusive women tend to be controlling, possessive, unpredictable in their outbursts, and extremely jealous. This is similar to the male-abuser-female-victim relationship. Physically abusive women are comparatively rare; however, many more psychologically or emotionally abuse their male partners.

Men tend to suffer the same torments as women as long as they stay in abusive relationships, including shock, unexpressed anger, misplaced guilt, and agony over whether to stay or go. Those who stay generally stay for the same reason women do-- fear, dependence, or a desire to keep the family together for the children.

Differences

When abused men leave, their experiences tend to be much different than that of their female counterparts. They are less likely to tell anyone the truth about the breakup, and must face sexist attitudes from many sources. Police tend to disbelieve the male victim or expect any man to be able to protect himself from any women. In our society there is still criticism of men who seek help for "personal" problems and again, there is the lingering perception of domestic violence as a "family matter."

Men who do speak up risk scorn, gossip, and public spotlight. Because such abuse is relatively unusual, or at least unreported, the cases that do come before the public eye are often sensationalized. Can you think of any domestic violence cases that involved a male victim?

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Module 6 – Reading 8

Detour Spotting for White Anti-racists

By joan olsson

For a white woman living in North America learning to be anti-racist is a re-education process. I must unlearn my thorough racist conditioning to re-educate and re-condition myself as an anti-racist. There is scant social or political encouragement for this journey of re-education. I am constantly tempted to detour off course by the racist propaganda of society and my own guilt. In the face of society's and my own resistance, sustaining the will to continue this journey takes a bold and stubborn effort.

This journey sends us into unfamiliar territory. No white person has ever lived in a non-racist North America. We were never taught the skills of anti-racist living. Indeed, we were carefully taught the opposite: to maintain our white privilege. Racism, the system of oppression (of people of color) and advantage (for white people) depends on the collusion and cooperation of white people for its perpetuation.

Most of us first became aware of racial prejudice and injustice as children. As white infants we were fed pablum of racist propaganda. That early training was comprehensive and left little room for question, challenge or doubt. Our childhood games, rhymes and media conspired: "Eenie, meenie, minie, mo; catch a n. . . .r by his toe…" We played cowboys and Indians. All of us knew the Indians were bad and had to die. My WWII generation watched "Bugs Bunny" outwit evil Japanese villains.

As Lillian Smith acknowledged:

> *"These ceremonials in honor of white supremacy, performed from babyhood, slip from the conscious mind down deep into muscles and glands and become difficult to tear out."* [1]

Our generous child wisdom told us racism was wrong, but there was no escaping the daily racist catechism. We resisted the lies, the deceit and the injustice of racism, but we did not have the skills to counter the poisonous messages. Our conditioning filled us with fear, suspicion and stereotypes that substituted for true knowing of people of color. We internalized our beliefs about people of color, ourselves, other white people and about being white. Those internalized attitudes became actualized into racist behavior.

As I continue my journey towards becoming a re-conditioned and effective anti-racist, I have become aware of "habits," attitudes and their attached behaviors, which divert me from my intended goal. To change the detouring behavior, I must first be fully conscious of what I'm doing, the behavior and its consequences. Next, I need to reflect on the behavior's attitudinal roots. Finally, I determine the prescribed, desired change I want to make and the best strategy for achieving it. Sometimes I need to remove the behavior from my personal repertoire. More often though, re-tooling is necessary, replacing the discarded pattern with new behaviors. It will likely take

repeated attempts before I have fully internalized and externalized the desired change.

Most of the obstacles and detours encountered on our journey of re-education are those same habitual behaviors birthed in our internalized beliefs. The behaviors will vary with each white person. I recognize that no two white people share exactly the same experiences and societal moldings. We learned racism in our unique and personal ways from different teachers and at different times. But we all learned the lessons well. I have observed in myself and other white people some common patterns of guilt, denial and defensiveness which appear regularly in our interactions with people of color and other white people.

Eighteen common detours from our anti-racist journey are examined in this way:

Please Note: "The Detour's Title" refers to the attitudes of behaviors that signal a detour or wrong turn into white guilt, denial or defensiveness.

"Reality Check and Consequences" provides clarification of the underlying meaning and consequence of this behavior pattern.

1. I'm Colorblind

"People are just people; I don't see color." Or "I don't think of you as Chinese."

Reality Check and Consequence

Statements like these assume that people of color are just like us, white, and have the same dreams, standards, problems, peeves that we do. "Colorblindness" negates the cultural values, norms, expectations and life experiences of people of color. Even if an individual white person could ignore a person's color, society does not. By saying we don't see their color, we are also saying we don't see our whiteness, This denies their experience of racism and our experience of privilege.

2. The Rugged Individual and The Bootstrap Theory

"America is the land of opportunity, built by rugged individuals, where anyone with grit can succeed if they pull up hard enough on their bootstraps."

Reality Check and Consequence

The "rugged individual" and the "bootstrap theory" are two of the crown jewels of U.S. social propaganda. They have allowed generation after generation to say, "If you succeed, you did that, but if you fail, or if you're poor, that's your fault." Belief in this propaganda is founded in a total denial of the impact of either oppression or privilege on any person's chance for success.

3. Reverse Racism

a. "People of color are just as racist as white people."

b. "Affirmative Action had a role years ago, but today it's just reverse racism; now it's discrimination against white men."

c. "The civil rights movement, when it began was appropriate, valuable, needed. But it's gone to the extreme. The playing field is now level. Now the civil rights movement is no longer working for equality but for revenge."

Reality Check and Consequences

a. Let's first define racism:

   Racism = Racial Prejudice (white people and people of color have this)

   Plus

   Systemic, Institutional Power (white people have this)

   To say People of Color can be racist, denies the power imbalance inherent in racism. Certainly, people of color can be and are prejudiced against white people. That was a part of their societal conditioning. A person of color can act on their prejudices to insult even hurt a white person. But there is a difference between being hurt and being oppressed. People of color, as a social group, do not have the societal, institutional power to oppress white people as a group. An individual person of color abusing a white person – while clearly wrong (no person should be insulted, hurt, etc.) - is acting out of a personal racial prejudice, not racism.

b. This form of denial is based in the false notion that the playing field is now level. When the people with privilege and historical access and advantage are expected to suddenly (in societal evolution time) share some of that power, it is often perceived as discrimination.

c. This (in reference to the "level playing field") was said by Rush Limbaugh, who is obviously no anti-racist, but this comment is loaded with white people's fears of people of color, especially if "they" gained control. Embedded here is also the assumption that to be "pro-Black" (or any color) is to be anti-white. A similar illogical accusation is directed at women who work for an end to violence against women and girls. Women who work to better the lives of women are regularly accused of being "anti-male."

4. Blame the Victim

a. *"We have advertised everywhere, there just aren't any qualified people of color for this job." Or "If he only had a stronger work ethic, or*

b. *"If she just felt better about herself…" or "Internalized racism is the real problem here," or*

c. *"She uses racism as an excuse to divert us from her incompetence," and "He goes looking for racism everywhere." (As if racism is so hidden or hard to uncover that people of color would have to search for it.)*

Realty Check and Consequences

All "blame the victim" behaviors have two things in common. First, they evade the real problem: racism. Second, they delete from the picture the agents of racism, white people and institutions, which either intentionally perpetrate or unintentionally collude with racism. As long as the focus remains on people of color we can minimize or dismiss their reactions, and never have to look directly at racism and our own responsibility or collusion.

5. Innocence By Association

"I'm not racist, because I have Vietnamese friends, or my lover is Black, I donate to Casa Latina, or I marched with Dr. King…."

Realty Check and Consequences

This detour into denial wrongly equates personal interactions with people of color, no matter how intimate they may be, with anti-racism. It assumes our personal associations free us magically from our racist conditioning.

6. The White Knight or White Missionary

"We (white people) know just where to build your new community center," or "Your young people (read youth of color) would be better served by traveling to our suburban training center."

Reality Check and Consequences

It is a racist, paternalistic assumption that well-meaning white people know what's best or people of color. Decisions, by white people, are made on behalf of people of color as though they were incapable of making their own. This is another version of "blame the victim" and "white is right." It places the problems at the feet of people of color, and the only "appropriate" solutions with white people. Once more the power of self-determination is taken from people of color. Regardless of the motive, it is still about white control.

7. The White Wash

"He's really a very nice guy, he's just had some bad experiences with Koreans," or "That's just the way Uncle Adolf jokes. He's very polite to the Black janitor in his building."

Reality Check and Consequences

We're trapped here by another version of our guilt response. We attempt to excuse, defend or cover up racist actions of other white people. We are particularly prone to this is the other person is close to us, family or friend, and if we feel their actions reflect on us.

8. I Was An Indian In A Former Life[2]

"After that sweat lodge I really know what it feels like to be an Indian. I have found my true spiritual path."

Reality Check and Consequences

This is spiritual or cultural appropriation and poses a serious threat to the integrity and survival of Native cultures. To fill a void in their own spiritual core, some white people are drawn into the New Age garden to pick from a variety of Native spiritual practices usually offered for sale. Since Native spiritual practice is inseparable from their history and current community, it cannot be disconnected from that context to service white people searching for life's meaning. Appropriating selected parts of Native cultures romanticizes the lives of Native peoples while denying their struggles. Their lands and livelihoods stolen, indigenous peoples now witness white people trying to steal their spirituality. Rather than escape our white racism by finding a spiritual path, we instead collude in one more way with the genocidal attacks on Native cultures.

9. The Isolationist

"I thought we resolved this issue (racism) when it came up on the board last year," or "We need to deal with this specific incident. Don't complicate it by bringing up irrelevant incidents of the past," or "This only happened today because the TV news last night showed police beating a Black kid."

Reality Check and Consequences

Attempts are made to isolate a particular incident of racism from the larger context. We blame a publicized incident of racism outside our organization to rationalize an internal incident and to avoid facing the reality of racism within. When trying to resolve an accusation of racism within an institution, we often see the incident in a vacuum, or as an aberration, in isolation from an historic pattern of racism. Racism has been so institutionalized that every "incident" is another symptom of the pattern. If we continue to react incident to incident, crisis to crisis, as though they are unconnected, we will find genuine resolution only further from our reach.

10. "Bending Over Backwards"

"Of course, I agree with you. (said to a person of color even when I disagree) or "I have to side with Betty on this." (Betty being a woman of color.)

Realty Check and Consequences

Our white guilt shows up as we defer to people of color. We don't criticize, disagree, challenge or question them the way we would white people. And if we do disagree, we don't do it with the same conviction or passion that we would display with a white person. Our racism plays out as a different standard for people of color than for white people. If this is our pattern, we can never have a genuine relationship with a person of color. People of color know when we are doing this. Our sincerity, commitment and courage will be rightly questioned. We cannot grow to a deeper level of trust and intimacy with people of color we treat in this way.

11. BWAME

"But What About ME. Look how I've been hurt, oppressed, exploited…?"

Reality Check and Consequences

This diminishes the experience of people of color by telling my own story of hardship. I lose an opportunity to learn more about the experience of racism from a person of color, while I minimize their experience by trying to make it comparable or less painful than mine.

12. Teach Me, Please

"I want to stop acting like a racist, so please tell me when I do something you think is racist."

Realty Check and Consequences

White people often assume we can learn about racism only from people of color. We further assume that people of color have the energy and/or desire to do this teaching. My understanding is that most people of color are weary of educating white people about racism. We will get stuck. We'll get frustrated and impatient with ourselves and other white people in this struggle. And we'll stay stuck if we don't seek help from other white anti-racists. Our inclination has been to ask people of color to help us. We should seek out other white people BEFORE we go to people of color. Perhaps, as we become more trustworthy as allies, we will build genuine like relationships with a few people of color who offer their reflections for us when we get stuck. This is at their discretion, not ours. We can't assume people of color should be so grateful for our attempts at anti-racism, that they will be willing to guide us whenever we are ready to be guided.

13. White On White, and Righteously So

"What is wrong with those white people? Can't they see how racist they're being?" or "I just can't stand to be around white people who act so racist," and "You're Preaching to the Choir." or "You're wasting your time with us, we're not the people who need this training."

Realty Check and Consequences

We distance ourselves from "other" white people. We see only confirmed bigots, card-carrying white supremacists and white people outside our circle as "real racists." We put other white people down, trash their work or behavior, or otherwise dismiss them. We righteously consider ourselves white people who have evolved beyond our racist conditioning. This is another level of denial. There are no "exceptional white people."[4] We may have attended many anti-racism workshops; we may not be shouting racist epithets or actively discriminating against people of color, but we still experience privilege based on our white skin color. We benefit from this system of oppression and advantage, no matter what our intentions are. This distancing serves only to divide us from potential allies and limit our own learning.

14. The "Certificate of Innocence"

Some times we seek or expect from people of color some public or private recognition and appreciation for our anti-racism. Other times we look for a "certificate of innocence" to tell us we are one of the good white people.

Reality Check and Consequences

If our ally commitment depends on positive reinforcement from people of color, we set ourselves up for failure. The first time a person of color is displeased with our actions, we could respond, "Well, if the people I'm doing all this for don't want my help, then why bother? I quit." Clearly, we're challenging racism for "them" not for us. We have not identified our self-interest, as white people, for fighting racism. Until we do, we cannot stay on this lifelong journey.

15. Smoke and Mirrors

We use the current PC language; we listen to the right music; we state the liberal line; we're seen at the right meetings with the right people. We even interrupt racist remarks when the right people are watching and when there is no risk to us. We look like an anti-racist.

Reality Check and Consequences

This is the "Avon Ally," the cosmetic approach. People of color and other white anti-racists see through this pretense quickly. This pseudo-anti-racist posturing only serves to collude with racism and weakens the credibility of sincere white anti-racists.

16. The Accountant

We keep a tally sheet, if we perform some "feat of anti-racism," we expect reciprocity from an individual or group of color, usually with some prestige or power that can serve our interests.

Reality Check and Consequences

I scratch your back, you scratch mine is NOT justice seeking nor ally behavior. It serves only to reduce justice work to some kind of power brokering currency.

17. Silence

We stay silent.

Reality Check and Consequences

Our silence may be a product of our guilt or fear of making people of color or white people angry with us or disappointed in us. We may be silent because our guilt stops us from disagreeing with people of color. We may be afraid that speaking out could result in losing some of our privilege. We may be silenced by fear of violence. The reasons for our silence are many, but each time we miss an opportunity to interrupt racism, or to act as allies or to interact genuinely with people of color or other white people. And no anti-racist action is taken as long as we are silent.

[A note about silence: silence is a complicated issue/matter. There are times when faced with a potential intervention situation that I may choose not to interrupt – for reasons of good sense or strategy. Anti-racists need courage, but foolish risks makes little sense. When choice is between intervening in this moment, alone, or gathering allies to speak out later in a more strategic way, the latter may prove more effective.]

18. Exhaustion and Despair – Sound The Retreat

'I'm exhausted. I'm only one person. Can't I stop and rest for a while." Or "Racism is so pervasive and entrenched, there just isn't any hope."

Reality Check and Consequences

Despair is a real enemy of anti-racists. For our commitment to be a lifelong one, we must find ways to mitigate the effects. Burn-out or desertion are of no use to the struggle. We can remember men who jumped on a "Take Back the Night" bandwagon, challenging violence against women – for a while. Until the attention on them as good men waned. Until the "glamour" of the issue faded. One of the historical, repeated failures of "liberals" in social justice movements has been short-term and inconsistent commitment to the "issue du jour."

If we wait for any reason, we engage our "default option."[5] As white people, we can take a break from the frustration and despair of anti-racism work. Such retreat will result in no significant consequences for us. Racism doesn't allow such a respite for people of color. One of the elemental privileges of being white is our freedom to retreat from the issue of racism. If things get tough we can always take a break. And our work against racism doesn't get done.

The Journey Continues

Once identified, behaviors like those above are possible to change. The patterns are repeated less often. We re-educate and re-tool ourselves to avoid racist behaviors and to take more potent anti-racist action.

People of color will continue to demand their rights, opportunities and full personhood. But racism in North America won't end because people of color demand it. Racism will only end when a significant number of white people of conscience, the people who wield systemic privilege and power with integrity, find the will and take action to dismantle it.

That won't happen until white people find racism in our daily consciousness as often as people of color do. For now we have to drag racism into our consciousness intentionally, for unlike our sisters and brothers of color, the most present daily manifestation of our white privilege is the possibility of forgetting about racism. We cannot. Racism continues in the name of all white people. While there is nothing about racism to celebrate, there is much to celebrate in a life lived in the pursuit of justice.